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REMARKS ON

SOME PARTS OF THE

REPORT OF THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

IN THE CASE OF

“ELPHINSTONE *AGAINST PURCHAS,*”

AND ON THE COURSE PROPER TO BE PURSUED BY THE CLERGY
IN REGARD TO IT.

A LETTER TO THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, M.A., D.C.L.,

FROM THE

RIGHT HON. SIR J. T. COLERIDGE.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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THE 'PURCHAS' JUDGMENT.

We have received the following letter from Canon Liddon on the 'Purchas' Judgment:—

"*Guardian* Newspaper, March 1.

"SIR—The late Mr. Keble said to me, not many months before his death, 'Depend upon it, we shall never have God's blessing on our work in the Church of England while we continue quietly to acquiesce in the present constitution of the Court of Final Appeal.' Mr. Keble had been dwelling on the contradiction which he held to exist between our Lord's own provisions for the maintenance of His truth and authority in His kingdom, and the purely human device for dealing with these solemn interests which we have in the Final Appeal Court. He had also insisted on the further contradiction which is observable between the Court as recently constituted, and the original terms of the Reformation settlement.

"Surely his words are being verified. The judgment which has been recently delivered in the case of Mr. Purchas would have condemned Mr. Keble's own practice had he been still among us. It does condemn, not merely those clergymen who are known as 'extreme ritualists,' but the High Church school as a whole. It condemns a practice—that of consecrating in front of the altar-table—cherished by the old-fashioned and learned churchmen of generations which preceded the Oxford movement. We shall, of course, be told that it simply declares the law with rigid impartiality. But to receive this statement with implicit faith, it would be necessary to shut one's eyes to the actual substance of the judgments which the Court delivers. I have, it is needless to say, not the slightest sympathy with any of the opinions of Mr. Voysey; they appear to me to be strictly incompatible with belief in the truth of anything that I can call Christianity. But, as a matter of justice, I cannot but think Mr. Voysey a hardly used man; he ought to have been protected against so very severe a sentence as that under which he lies, by the judgment of the Court of Final Appeal in the case of the *Essays and Reviews*. I can only account for the different verdicts of the Court in the two cases, by supposing that, for the moment, the Court adopts a popular as distinct

from an accurate and theological estimate of the language before it; and that it thus acquits the refined but far-reaching infidelity of the *Essayists*, in which the popular mind sees only a legitimate effort to assert speculative liberty, while it condemns the coarser infidelity of *The Sling and the Stone*; the popular voice having loudly, and I am far from saying untruly, denounced that work as antichristian. In the same manner, to an ordinary understanding it would seem that the 'Westerton' judgment ought to have rendered that recently delivered in Mr. Purchas's case impossible. It is, Sir, *not* easy to believe that the Court is quite incapable of interpreting the documents before it by real or supposed considerations of policy! that, in short, *it* never regards these documents in the light of a plastic material which may be made to support conclusions held to be advisable at the moment, and on independent grounds.

" The more thoughtful and earnest members of the party which urges on these prosecutions through the Church Association must, surely, at times doubt whether they are really doing God's work. Infidelity menaces us with intellectual forces greater than at any previous period in the history of the Christian Church, and here we Christians are waging a war of mutual extermination about questions of ceremonial. Far less important than this consideration is the bearing of these struggles on the security of the Establishment. But if the High Church party is desired to take its choice between submission to a tribunal which proscribes its historical traditions, and a separation from the English Episcopate, which it shrinks from as from schism (and therefore as sin in the sight of God), the result is not difficult to foresee. Churchmen will, to a very great extent indeed, find relief from the dilemma in a third course—viz., co-operation with the political forces which, year by year, more and more steadily, are working towards disestablishment. This is not a menace; it is the statement of a simple fact. It will, I trust, suggest to many others than those who are directly interested in the particulars of this judgment, that if the historical basis of the Church of England is to be narrowed down to the proportions of a Puritanical sect, or something very like it, it will not by any means be certain that the expulsion of the representatives of Andrewes and Keble from the ranks of the Church's ministry will be the only consequence of the proceeding.

" H. P. LIDDON.

" *Christ Church.*"



LETTER, &c.

MY DEAR MR. LIDDON,

HEATH COURT, OTTERY ST. MARY,

March 21, 1871.

I trust you will forgive me for addressing you in print, and without your leave first asked, in respect of your letter in the *Guardian* of March 1st. The subject of that letter is one of great interest, agitating many excellent persons; and some of your remarks go beyond your subject, and touch on matters of vital interest to us all. If I shall be found to differ from you, and perhaps to express myself warmly, you may be sure I shall do so with diffidence and sincere respect on my part; certainly, I know I address a candid reader, one disposed to give to what I say perhaps more than all the consideration it may be entitled to.

You will understand, of course, that I write in respect of the Report recently made by the Judicial Committee in the "Purchas" Case. I am not about to defend it. No one, however, ought to pronounce a condemnation of the solemn judgment of such a tribunal without much consideration; and this remark applies with special force to myself, well knowing as I do those from whom it proceeded, and having withdrawn from sharing in the labours of the Committee only because age had impaired with the strength of my body the faculties also of my mind; and so disabled me from the proper discharge of any judicial duties.

With this admission on my part, I yet venture to say that I think Mr. Purchas has not had justice done to him in two main points of the late appeal: I mean the use of the

vestments complained of and the side of the communion table which he faced when consecrating the elements for the Holy Communion. Before I state my reasons, let me premise that I am no Ritualist, in the now conventional use of the term. I do not presume to judge of the motives of those to whom that name is applied. From the information of common, but undisputed, report as to some of the most conspicuous, I believe them entitled to all praise for their pastoral devotedness and their laborious, self-denying lives; still, I do not shrink from saying that I think them misguided, and the cause of mischief in the Church. So much for my *feeling* in regard to the vestments. I prefer the surplice at all times, and in all ministrations. As to the place of standing at the consecration, my *feeling* is with them. It seems to me not desirable to make it essential or even important that the people should see the breaking of the bread, or the taking the cup into the hands of the priest, and positively mischievous to encourage them in gazing on him, or watching him with critical eyes while so employed. I much prefer the *spirit* of the Rubric of 1549—1st Book of Edward VI.—which says—“These words before rehearsed are to be said turning still to the altar, without any elevation, or shewing the sacraments to the People.” The use now enforced, I think, tends to deprive the most solemn rite of our religion of one of its most solemn particulars. Surely, whatever school we belong to, and even if we consider the whole rite merely commemorative, it is a very solemn idea to conceive the priest at the head of his flock, and, as it were, a shepherd leading them on in heart and spirit, imploring for them, and with them, the greatest blessing which man is capable of receiving on earth; he alone uttering the prayer—they meanwhile kneeling all, and in deep silence listening, not gazing, rather with closed eyes,—and with their whole undistracted attention, joining in the prayer with one heart,

and without sound until the united “Amen” breaks from them at the close, and seals their union and assent.

This is my *feeling*—and I see no word in the sober language of our Rubric which interferes with it—but my *feeling* is of no importance in the argument, and I mention it only in candour, to show in what spirit I approach the argument.

Now Mr. Purchas has been tried before the Committee for offences alleged to have been committed against the provisions of the “Act of Uniformity”: of this Act the Common Prayer Book is part and parcel. As to the vestments, his conduct was alleged to be in derogation of the Rubric as to the ornaments of the Church and the Ministers thereof, which ordains that such shall be retained and be in use as were in this Church of England by the authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI.

The Act of Uniformity is to be construed by the same rules exactly as any Act passed in the last Session of Parliament. The clause in question (by which I mean the Rubric in question) is perfectly unambiguous in language, free from all difficulty as to construction; it therefore lets in no argument as to intention other than that which the words themselves import. There might be a seeming difficulty in *fact*, because it might not be known what vestments were in use by authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI.; but this difficulty has been removed. It is conceded in the Report that the vestments, the use of which is now condemned, were in use by authority of Parliament in that year. Having that fact, you are bound to construe the Rubric as if those vestments were specifically named in it, instead of being only referred to. If an Act should be passed to-morrow that the uniform of the Guards should henceforth be such as was ordered for them by authority, and used by them in the 1st Geo. I., you would first ascertain what that uniform was; and, having ascertained

it, you would not enquire into the changes which may have been made, many or few, with or without lawful authority, between the 1st Geo. I. and the passing of the new Act? All these, that Act, specifying the earlier date, would have made wholly immaterial. It would have seemed strange, I suppose, if a commanding officer, disobeying the statute, had said in his defence—"There have been many changes since the reign of Geo. I.; and as to 'retaining,' we put a gloss on that, and thought it might mean only retaining to the Queen's use; so we have put the uniforms safely in store." But, I think, it would have seemed more strange to punish and mulct him severely if he had obeyed the law and put no gloss on plain words.

This case stands on the same principle. The Rubric indeed seems to me to imply with some clearness that in the long interval between Ed. VI. and the 14th Ch. II. there had been many changes; but it does not stay to specify them, or distinguish between what was mere evasion and what was lawful: it quietly passes them all by, and goes back to the legalised usage of the 2nd year of Ed. VI. What had prevailed since, whether by an Archbishop's gloss, by Commissions or even Statutes, whether, in short, legal or illegal, it makes quite immaterial.

I forbear to go through the long enquiry which these last words remind one of—not, I am sure, out of any disrespectful feeling to the learned and reverend authors of the Report, but because it seems to me wholly irrelevant to the point for decision. This alone I must add, that even were the enquiry relevant, the authorities on which they rely do not appear to me so clear or cogent, nor the analogies relied on so just, as to warrant the conclusion arrived at. For it should never be forgotten that the defendant in a criminal case, acquitted as to this charge by the learned Judge below, was entitled to every presumption in his favour, and could not properly be

condemned but by a judgment free from all reasonable doubt. And this remark acquires additional strength, because the judgment will be final not only on him but the whole Church for all time, unless reversed by the Legislature.

Upon the second point I have less to say, though it is to me much the most important. The Report, I think, cannot be shown conclusively to be wrong here, as it may be on the other; still it does not seem to me to be shown conclusively to be right. You have yourself given us reason in your second letter of the 8th March for doubting at least.

Let me add that, in my opinion, on such a question as this, where a conclusion is to be arrived at upon the true meaning of Rubrics framed more than two centuries since, and certainly not with a view to any such minute criticism as on these occasions is and must be applied to them, and where the evidence of facts is by no means clear, none probably can be arrived at free from reasonable objection. What is the consequence? It will be asked, Is the question to receive no judicial solution? I am not afraid to answer, Better far that it should receive none than that injustice should be done. The principles of English law furnish the practical solution: dismiss the party charged, unless his conviction can be based on grounds on which reasonable and competent minds can rest satisfied, and without scruple. And what mighty mischief will result to countervail the application of this rule of justice? For two centuries our Church has subsisted without an answer to the question which alone gives importance to this enquiry; and surely has not been without God's blessing for that time, in spite of all much more serious shortcomings. Let us remember that Charity, or, to use, perhaps, a better word, Love, is the greatest of all; if that prevail, there need be little fear for our Faith or our Hope.

These last words, my dear Mr. Liddon, I meant to address

to both parties in this controversy, venturing to think the caution not out of season to both ; and by Love I do not mean between themselves only, but to the flocks whose shepherds they are. But now let me add a word to those from whom the appellants come. They reject the vestments. Are they quite sure on what ground the surplice at the Holy Communion is to be rested safely. The judgment may be said to have wholly annulled the Rubric in respect to the vestments ; but if the use of the surplice were to be subjected to the same sort of enquiry which has been applied to the vestments, is it certain what the result would be ? You, perhaps, are not old enough to remember, what I do perfectly, the surplice riots, when a very few clergymen began first to preach surpliced, and in a city not far from where I am now writing, at the hazard of injury to their persons. We can afford, we think, to smile at such things now ; but the example should not be lost on us. On both sides we should consider what manner of spirit it is that guides us in these conflicts, and to what results they may lead.

I am sensible that you may ask me, having so far expressed so much concurrence with you, why I have thought it necessary to write to you at all, much more why I commenced my letter as I have done. I did not think I should be so long in this preliminary matter, and I will now proceed to answer the question, to which I feel I am open. Your letter speaks of the Final Court of Appeal in terms, and with a conclusion in view, to neither of which I can agree ; and further, you speak of the disestablishment of the Church in a way which I hope I may misunderstand, and, if I do not, I would implore your reconsideration of.

The first of these was a subject, almost the only one, on which I had the misfortune to differ from my most dear and venerated friend, John Keble. You have read my memoir of him, and, I doubt not, two letters from him to myself

upon the subject. I believe, certainly, he retained his opinion to the last. He objected first (I use his own words) that "the Judicial Power in regard of alleged offences *against the Faith* (the italics are my own) had been entrusted by the Founder of the Society (the Christian Religion) to persons nominated by Him for the purpose," meaning, no doubt, the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops. To make this applicable to the present argument, it must be understood of an authority conferred to endure for all time, and not to be modified by any change of circumstances in the Church, or, at all events, not in fact modified by any change existing in our branch of the Church. I feel that I may be exposing my own ignorance (for he was not a man to lay down his position without consideration, and his knowledge of Scripture, as you know better than I do, being a more competent judge, was most intimate and accurate), still I cannot avoid asking, On what Scriptural authority is this founded? I know of the power given to loose and retain all sins to St. Peter. I know the promise of ratification in Heaven of the Apostolic Sentence on earth. I must admit, what may be relied on, the reprobation by St. Paul of the Corinthian converts, who, in the case of civil controversies, sued brother converts in the heathen courts of law. I know, too, the course which Our Blessed Lord directs to be pursued, where one brother sins against another —ending in the last stage in a reference to the Church. But for different reasons in the different instances, all seem to me to fail in supporting the position now under examination.

But I have an excusable reluctance to pursue this enquiry further; it is painful to me to argue against his authority, and unfeignedly I feel that, because I am deficient in respect of Scriptural knowledge, I think he may have had more authority than I suppose. You may inform me better,

and, if you do, you may rely on it I shall withdraw from my position. Waiving for the present this point I shall, by and bye, say a few words more on the expediency of referring the trial of ecclesiastical offences on final appeal to a Court of Ecclesiastics only, which is, after all, the matter practically in dispute.

I now return to your letter. You proceed to attempt to show that the words of Keble to yourself, which you cite, are justified, by remarks on this Report and some previous judgments of the same tribunal, which appear to you so inconsistent with each other as to make it difficult to believe that the Court was impartial, or "incapable of regarding the documents before it in the light of a plastic material, which might be made to support conclusions held to be advisable at the moment, and on independent grounds."

I wish these words had never been written. They will, I fear, be understood as conveying your formed opinions; and coming from you, and addressed to minds already excited and embittered, they will be readily accepted, though they import the heaviest charges against judges—some of them bishops—all of high and hitherto unimpeached character. A very long experience of judicial life makes me know that judges will often provoke and bitterly disappoint both the suitors before them and the public, when discharging their duty honestly and carefully, and a man is scarcely fit for the station unless he can sit tolerably easy under censures which even these may pass upon him. Yet, imputations of partiality or corruption are somewhat hard to bear when they are made by persons of your station and character. When the Judicial Committee sits on appeals from the Spiritual Courts, it *may* certainly be under God's displeasure, the members *may* be visited with judicial blindness, and deprived of the integrity which in other times and cases they manifest. Against such a supposition there is no direct argument, and

I will not enter into such a disputation. I have so much confidence in your generosity and candour, on reflection, as to believe you would not desire I should.

In the individual case, I simply protest against the insinuation. I add a word or two by way of general observation.

No doubt you have read the judgments in all the cases you allude to carefully; but have you read the pleadings and the arguments of the counsel, so as to know accurately the points raised for the consideration of those who were to decide? To know the offence charged and the judgment pronounced may suffice in some cases for an opinion by a competent person, whether the one warranted the other; but more is required to warrant the imputation of inconsistency, partiality, or indirect motives. He who takes this on himself should know further how the pleadings and the arguments presented the case for judgment, and made this or that particular relevant in the discussion. Every one at all familiar with this matter knows that a judgment not uncommonly fails to reflect the private opinion of the judge on the whole of a great point; because the issues of law or fact actually brought before him, and which alone he was bound to decide, did not bring this before him. And this rule, always binding, is, of course, never more so than in regard to a Court of Final Appeal, which should be careful not to conclude more than is regularly before it. Let me add that a just and considerate person will wholly disregard the gossip which flies about in regard to cases exciting much interest; passing words in the course of an argument, forgotten when the judgment comes to be considered, are too often caught up, as having guided the final determination.

And now, trusting you will see in what I have said no mark of want of respect, but rather proof how much confidence I have in your candour, I pass to a few remarks on the first of the two great points which your letter presents

for discussion: the necessity, namely, for a repeal of the law by which jurisdiction in the case of alleged religious offences is given to the Judicial Committee. That is, undoubtedly, the true point for those to aim at who agree with you generally. I am told, indeed, that many good men are united in a determination to resist the law while it remains unrepealed. I venture to think that they can hardly have considered calmly the character or the consequences of that course, nor how mischievous an example they will be setting to their flocks.

You will understand that I must now assume, and with what guards I assume, that the present jurisdiction may in the sight of God lawfully exist—and I suppose I may assume absolutely that you contemplate the creation of some other court for the trial of these offences, with power to punish offenders, and give effect to sentences, which may suspend them from the enjoyment of their property, or even deprive them of it. Of course, this must be in the first place the act of the Temporal Power: you can scarcely suppose that there is now subsisting in the Church alone, or that the Church of her own power could create, any such jurisdiction—for you cannot forget the difference between an Established Church as it now exists with us, and the Church of the Apostolic times. Now let us suppose the accomplishment of your first step complete—demolition—and that of your second—creation—hopeful; may I ask what is the new court in contemplation? You will answer, I presume, that there is no difficulty. You have it ready in the body of the successors of the Apostles. Will you then divide them according to Provinces, and have two Supreme Courts, and so run the risk of conflicting decisions in Canterbury and York; or will you unite the Provinces for this purpose, by the help again of the Temporal Power? Without it the United Body, you will see, would have no jurisdiction binding on the Clergy of either Province. Every step so far must be entirely the work of the

Temporal Power ; but let me suppose you have overcome your scruples of leaning on it, and that you have found a willing Parliament sweeping away these and many more such difficulties for you, and giving you *all things* according to your mind ; and even further let me suppose that the great body of the Clergy, for once forgetting all their differences, and breaking up all their party divisions, are heartily well disposed to your scheme, I come still to a question, important, and which I am sure I do not intend to put disrespectfully—Do you seriously expect to find in the Bishops sitting in one body, or two, or in any rotation, however impartially framed, a satisfactory and competent court for the final decision of the cases which a Church, unhappily divided on many points, would in due course bring before them ?—do you expect to have no wrong judgments, none such as to raise suspicions of partiality and prejudice ?

I wish to speak of the Bishops with the respect due to their high office, and with the love and honour with which I regard some of their Lordships whom I have the honour to know personally ; but I must confess still, I could not answer these questions in the affirmative ; and then I remember that unsatisfactory judgments from such a court as you contemplate would be far more injurious to the faith, far more painful to the conscience, than the same judgments proceeding from the present authority. Whatever ignorant people may suppose, there goes more to the making of a good judge than ability, knowledge, and honesty all united. There may be now and then remarkable exceptions, as some men are said to be born orators, or generals, so now and then a man may be a born judge ; but as a rule applicable to a body, judging is a craft, and he who would be a good craftsman must be trained to it.

You know well that some, I believe not a few, of the

Founders of our Colleges, without having this particular emergency in view, did in some sort, and partially, provide for it, by requiring that all or a portion of their Fellows should regularly proceed in the Canon and Civil Law; and you know that in substance this provision has become wholly inoperative. But had it not, and had this sort of education proceeded farther, it would but have done half the work required: the attendance in courts, and the taking part in legal arguments, are equally essential parts of the training for the office of a judge. You will deceive yourself if you suppose that the proceedings in a trial before the court you devise would differ materially or favourably from those before that which you condemn. The advocates, I suppose, must still be laymen; and they (or if you substituted clerks, these) would not be less ingenious, discursive, or, it may be, misleading. Then the eminent laymen who now practise before the Committee would not be likely to show more deference towards your tribunal than they manifest towards the present. Nor do I think your judges, however high in rank, would be less influenced by their arguments, or feel less difficulty in directing the course and enforcing observance either by them or by themselves of the true limits of the argument—their want of experience might often make them feel more. You must remember they would be sitting to try a cause, not to frame a decree; and I do not know whether, if they were, the debates in either House of Convocation have tended to increase your confidence.

If these remarks be true generally, see with what peculiar force they apply to Bishops, all whose antecedents, especially of those who have best prepared themselves for their high and holy calling, have tended rather to unfit than to fit them for this particular duty. And is it desirable that,

while incumbents and charged with the care of parishes, they should be diverted from that care by preparing themselves for this? and when they are raised to the Bench, do you think that—worn down, as even the strong ones among them are at present, with labours which they can neither put aside nor yet master without loss of health and strength — it is desirable to add this additional duty to their present burdens? could they, in fact, undertake it, without giving up part of that which must be done, and another cannot do for them? Let it not be supposed it will be a light matter they will undertake, if they should do it as well as you expect they would, and I should rejoice if they were found able to do.

And now, before I part from this subject, let me give you the benefit of every supposition in your favour. You have abolished the Committee, so far as regards the trial of religious offences, and the new tribunal is in full work; still you must not suppose that you have put an end to the jurisdiction of purely Temporal Courts in such cases. It is a maxim daily acted on, and indeed essential to the complete administration of justice, that where a court has jurisdiction to try the principal issue in a cause, it has incidentally jurisdiction to try also all collateral matters which are essential to the conclusion on that issue. It would still, therefore, be easy in an action for libel to raise any of these questions before a Judge of Assize and a Jury; from the direction of the Judge to the Jury, the case might go to the Court of Exchequer chamber, and thence for a final decision to the House of Lords. Practically, I do not suppose that this would often occur; yet as in this matter there would probably be temper on both sides, and certainly ingenuity and perseverance, it might, and it is right, to mention the possibility; that your case may be considered on all sides. Indeed without temper, or the exercise of misplaced in-

genuity, you must know that in the Court of Chancery a question of trust might, and not very uncommonly does, raise for decision important points of doctrine.

Now what are the weapons with which the warfare is to be carried on, and the present system assailed? I suppose it is admitted that no attempt to procure a statutory destruction of it is at all likely to succeed at present; but, as I understand, passive resistance to this particular decree will be resorted to by a considerable number of the clergy; in other words, they will not obey the Law, and will set an example, which their congregations may be too ready to follow in other matters, of disobedience to the Law. I by no means deny that there are supposable cases, in which this might be a duty; but it is a very grave responsibility for any man to determine for himself that a particular case is one of these—*prima facie* it must be admitted to be a duty to obey the laws of one's country—a duty which no one, and least of all the constituted teachers of the people, can lightly absolve himself from performing. The objection here must be either to the jurisdiction of the court generally; and then it would apply to every decree which it has made, or shall make; or it is limited to this particular decree. I have said what occurs to me on the first supposition, and I will not repeat it; but, as to the second, it may wound our feelings, it may deny the use of what to us is a help to devotional feeling, it may mar, if I may so say, the beauty of holiness; but does it touch the doctrine of the Sacrament?—are the vestments or the position at consecration any part of that?—is the use of the former, or the selection of the latter, essential to a perfect consecration or an effectual reception of the Holy Elements? Nothing of this sort can, I am persuaded, be affirmed; and, if it cannot, I do not see how conscience can require disobedience to the Law. Be it always remembered that nothing touches the liberty of the clergy to

believe and to teach as the true doctrine what they believed and taught before.

I need not point out that in these matters there are two sides—there are, it is well known, many congregations to whom that is shocking which to others is delightful. If we mean to deal charitably, or justly, or even sensibly, in any such controversy, we must look at things for a while from our adversary's point of view, not only and always from our own—and this not the less because we fail to meet with similar forbearance—we must take account of his feelings, however unreasonable they may seem to us, as well as of our own; and, if we do, we may find ground for excusing his bitterness and moderating our own heat. Remaining firm in our own convictions, we may yet find that the present is exactly a case in which Charity may require condescension to what we think ignorance, even perverseness, in others, but which, after all, may be only a weakness as conscientious as our own happy freedom from doubt. There is, moreover, a consideration which circumstances cause to press on me with much force. It has been my duty for years, more often than commonly falls to the lot of laymen, to receive the Holy Communion in the room of a sick friend: now who would dream of vestments *there*? who would think even a surplice, however desirable, which I quite think it is, absolutely *necessary there*? Who would cavil at the place in which the Priest stood when consecrating *there*? Let us be very careful not so to exaggerate this matter as to suggest the shadow of a doubt to the weakened mind of any scrupulous sick person that for want of these the Cup of blessing is less rich or precious in the least imaginable degree.

It would be presumptuous in me to do more than point out in passing the inevitable mischief attendant on combinations such as the one now spoken of—they are begun

with the purest motives, the strongest and sincerest protestations of peaceful intentions; all ostentation is to be avoided, all that Charity requires is to be observed—these are the comely beginnings, and they attract zealous men—how often do they end in the ugliness of party?

I hasten to my conclusion too long delayed, but a word must still be added on a subject of not less consequence than any I have yet touched on. You say, “Churchmen will to a very great extent indeed find relief from the dilemma in a third course, viz. *co-operation with the political forces*, which, year by year, more and more steadily, are working towards disestablishment. This is not a menace: it is the statement of a simple fact.”

I am bound to believe, and I do believe, you do not intend this as a menace; but such a statement of a future course to depend on a contingency cannot but read very much like one—and against your intention it may well be understood as such. You do not say that *you* are one who will co-operate with the political party which now seeks to disestablish the Church, in accomplishing its purpose, and I do not suppose you ever will. But on behalf, not so much of the clergy, as of the laity—on behalf of the worshippers in our churches, of the sick to be visited at home—of the poor in their cottages, of our children in their schools—of our Society in general, I entreat those of the clergy who are now feeling the most acutely in this matter not to suffer their minds to be so absorbed by the present grievance as to take no thought of the evils of disestablishment. I am not foolishly blind to faults in the clergy—indeed I fear I am sometimes even censorious in regard to them—and some of their faults I do think may be referable to Establishment; the possession of house and land, and a sort of independence of their parishioners, in some cases seems to tend to secularity. I regret sometimes their partisanship at elections, their speeches at public

dinners. But what good gift of God is not liable to abuse from men ? Taken as a whole, we have owed, and we do owe, under Him, to our Established Clergy more than we can ever repay, much of it rendered possible by their Establishment. I may refer, and now with especial force, to Education—their services in this respect no one denies—and but for Establishment these, I think, could not have been so effectively and systematically rendered. We are now in a great crisis as to this all-important matter. Concurring, as I do heartily, in the praise which has been bestowed on Mr. Forster, and expecting that his great and arduous office will be discharged with perfect impartiality by him, and with a just sense how much is due to the clergy in this respect, still it cannot be denied that the powers conferred by the Legislature on the holder of it are alarmingly great, even if necessary ; and who shall say in what a spirit they may be exercised by his successor ? For the general upholding of religious education, in emergencies not improbable, to whom can we look in general so confidently as to the Parochial Clergy ? I speak now specially in regard to parishes such as I am most familiar with, in agricultural districts, small, not largely endowed, sometimes without resident gentry, and with the land occupied by rack-renting farmers, indifferent or hostile to education.

I have but glanced at a very few of the benefits we owe to our Establishment ; this is not the place for a full discussion of the whole great question—and if it were, I am not competent to the task—

“ Nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum.”

If the evil, be it our trial or our chastisement, is to fall on us, I should not despair—I should still believe that the Church was under God’s protection, and stripped as we might

seem to be of this or that help or safeguard, I should still rely on His blessing our honest endeavours to perform the duties imposed on us. It will not be the first time that the Ark of the Church has seemed to be overwhelmed in the waves, and again has righted : if we are to go through the same trial with the same issue, only let us make a better use of our restoration than our forefathers did of the mercy vouchsafed to them.

For the clergy to join in a political crusade to accelerate their disestablishment would seem to me to argue such a dementation both as to the act and the object as would indeed almost cause the most confident to despair.

“Hoc Ithacus velit, et magno mercentur Atridae.”

My letter has been almost entirely addressed in effect to those with whom you feel united, but I cannot close it thus. Disguise it as we may, ours is, in one sense, a divided Church. Within our pale are two great parties at issue on more than formal matters—on points no less important than the two Sacraments “generally necessary to salvation.” This is a fact never enough to be lamented, yet which it is idle to attempt to conceal ; but good and wise Christians have thought—and happily teach us—that, considering how far we agree, and the mysterious nature of those points as to which we differ—our unhappy differences are not such as to prevent both parties from being united in one Church. Those have thought this who cannot justly be called Latitudinarians, or charged with indifference as to Christian doctrine.

May we not stand on that platform ?—we are, in fact, standing on it, and have been so at least from the date of the Gorham decision. Some may smile at us, some may scorn us. Be it so ; but let us look around at home and in

every quarter of the globe, and say, Have we been, in spite of trials and difficulties which must have destroyed a house built on sand, fallen, or been deprived of God's blessing on us? If we may so stand, may we not stand in peace with each other as to all things not essential to the Faith, and in Charity even as to them? May we not cease to waste our energies in conflicts, such as have occasioned the Purchas litigation? I do not forget what is behind and thinly covered by it,—the fear of Rome—a fear, as I think, wonderfully excessive—but, if there be ground for it, even against that danger we shall be more safe if, first, we be united among ourselves, and, secondly, if we will, with one heart, direct all our energies against a worse enemy than Rome, and now, I believe, a more powerful one—I mean Infidelity. That contest is enough for our day. You know as well as—perhaps better than—any man how it presses, where it touches us, whom amongst us it assails, under what colours it fights, and with what various weapons. You know how it troubles, where it does not overthrow; how it weakens, where it does not destroy; and every thinking man, I suppose, knows what misery, what destruction, ensues where it conquers. Surely here are sick to be healed, wounded to be tended, poor distressed souls to be soothed and set at rest, young to be guided and guarded, weak minds to be strengthened, strong ones to be reasoned down.

And may not High and Low meet in the discharge of their common duty? I believe that if the good men of both parties laboured together, shoulder to shoulder, in such works as these, they would come to know and to love each other better; they would see the good more clearly, they would judge the evil in each other more charitably, and have not merely a truce but a permanent peace, without unworthy concession on either side.

By the sincere desire of such a communion I have been tempted to write to you this long letter, and to venture out of my depth in troubled waters. If I have sometimes seemed to you over-vehement in thought, or strong in expression, I entreat your forgiveness and your belief that I am, with sincere respect and much-deserved gratitude,

Yours truly,

J. T. COLERIDGE.



